DRAFT LETTER/EMAIL TO BE SENT TO YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS IN MARCH ON LETTERHEAD

EMAIL A COPY TO CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS WHO YOU MEET WITH

Month day, 2024

Dear Senator/Representative,

On behalf of [my organization,] as well as other EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD) organizations similar to mine nationwide, I am reaching out to ask for your support on two important priorities related to the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA).

**First**, I ask that you support the **reauthorization of the EDA**. **Second**, I ask for your support in including **robust funding for EDA,** particularly for EDA **Partnership Planning Grants** in FY25 appropriations.

**EDA Reauthorization**

Congressional action is needed to support **EDA Reauthorization** during the current session of Congress. In March 2024, the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) introduced the ***Economic Development Reauthorization Act of 2024 (S. 3891),*** bipartisan legislation that would reauthorize the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration for the first time in 20 years. **Action is needed by legislators to pass Senate Bill 3891, and to pursue the introduction and passage of similar legislation in the House.**

Senate bill 3891 is a **bipartisan bill** that would authorize EDA’s funding and programs for five years, from fiscal years 2025 through 2029. This bill, if passed, would modernize and update various elements of EDA’s statute, making the agency more effective and impactful in supporting projects in local communities. The bill would improve and reauthorize many of EDA’s core traditional programs including Public Works; Partnership Planning; Training, Research, and Technical Assistance; Economic Adjustment Assistance; and Assistance to Coal Communities. It would also enhance or expand EDA’s ability to make impactful investments into high-speed broadband, disaster recovery, workforce training, and predevelopment. Additionally, the bill would revise EDA’s cost sharing requirements by increasing EDA’s federal share and reducing local match, making it less burdensome for rural, small, and resource-challenged communities to apply and compete for EDA funding. These provisions would have immensely positive impacts for communities across the country.

**EDA Appropriations**

Additionally, I ask for your support to include robust funding for EDA in FY25 appropriations. Specifically, I ask for your support to include at least **$90 million for EDA Partnership Planning Grants** in the final **FY25 Commerce, Justice, Science,** and Related Agencies appropriations bill. $90 million is the authorized funding level for Partnership Planning contained within the **bipartisan** **EDA reauthorization bill** that was introduced by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works in March 2024.***The Economic Development Reauthorization Act of 2024 (S. 3891)****,* if passed,would authorize $90 million for Partnership Planning in FY25, escalating to **$130 million** by FY29. In FY25, I encourage appropriators to follow this recommendation that has been put forward by the authorizing committee in a bipartisan manner. A funding level of $90 million would allow each of the 400+ EDA-designated EDD organizations nationally to hire and retain at least two full-time dedicated staff members each.

Over the past five years, although EDA’s current overall annual appropriation level is **40% higher** than it was five years ago, funds for local **EDA Partnership Planning funds** have increased by **less than 5%** within the same timeframe. This places an increasingly heavy administrative burden on the very same core local stakeholders that EDA is designed to support, by overburdening local EDD organizations like mine with implementation responsibilities without providing enough funding for project planning and administrative and staff capacity.

Beginning in FY21, appropriators took important steps to begin incrementally increasing this level in tandem with other increases for EDA funding levels across the board.Economic Development Districts are grateful for recent incremental increases, however the Partnership Planning funding level for FY24 has fallen back once again, down to **$34.5 million**. Generally, the appropriation level for Partnership Planning has continued to remain relatively flat, even while EDA’s overall appropriation has continued to receive substantial increases over time.

Furthermore, modest increases in Partnership Planning do not adequately support or keep pace with the needs of the more than 400 EDDs facilitating local community and economic development support work nationally.

In fact, the Congressionally appropriated annual increases for Partnership Planning over the past five years have been so minor that **EDA has made an administrative decision** **not** **to provide any additional planning funds** directly to EDDs. No increase in annual funding levels was provided by EDA to its local EDD stakeholdersin FY21, FY22, or FY23 for Partnership Planning, despite the Congressionally appropriated increases during each of those years. For example, the $1.5 million increase that Congress appropriated from FY22 to FY23, divided among the more than 400 EDDs nationally, would only amount to approximately $3,750 per organization, if it were divided among the 400 EDDs and passed on to them directly. But, given the small nature of recent annual increases, along with the steadily growing volume of EDDs becoming designated every year, and other stakeholders also vying for these resources, EDA has not provided any additional EDA Partnership Planning funding to local EDD stakeholders for the past three years.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | FY 2020Final | FY 2021Final | FY 2022Final | FY 2023Final | FY24 Final | FY25STAKEHOLDER REQUEST |
| EDA Total Appropriation | $333million | $346million | $373.5million | $498million | $468million |  |
|  EDA Partnership Planning Grants | $33million | $33.5million | $34.5million | $36million | $34.5million | **$90****million** |

EDA Partnership Planning Grants are crucially important because they help support local economic and community development organizations and their work. EDA-designated Economic Development Districts use EDA planning funds to: facilitate the EDA-mandated local planning process to help ensure the success of subsequent EDA project investments; to assist other local organizations with grant writing and applications for EDA funding; to solicit local public input to determine which local projects are priorities for EDA investment; and to help other local EDA grantees steward the funding they receive properly.

**Currently, each locally-based EDD organization receives just $70,000 annually, which is barely enough to cover the salary of one full-time staff person** who is tasked with carrying out EDA’s requirements for local EDDs, including the responsibilities listed above as well as the EDA-mandated process of creating an updating a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) plan for the region.

For these reasons, **Congressional action is needed to increase Partnership Planning funding in FY25 to at least $90 million.**

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Organization